

Sting Operations Irk Northern Cape Small-Scale Fishers

By [FINSA reporter](#) 04 April 2024



Small-scale fishers countrywide are annoyed by the allocation of vessels to co-operatives. Photo : Stock

Reductions in the line fish allocation have caused challenges for small-scale fishers including delayed permits and a decrease in the number of boats allocated to SSF cooperatives. Further pressure was brought to bear by a South African Police Service (SAPS) multi-disciplinary operation under Operation Phakisa, which over the Easter weekend focused their attentions on Northern Cape coastal communities in Port Nolloth, Kleinsee, Brazil, Groenrivier, Alexander Bay, and Honderklipbaai.

According to a statement from SAPS Northern Cape, the focus continues to be illegal activities in relation to marine related crimes. Working with the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, teams from different entities including SARS Customs Unit, SAN Parks, the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy, and the Department of Agriculture Environmental Affairs Rural Development and Land Reform, participated.

The thrust of the activities were on compliance of prescribed ranching, fishing, and harvesting regulations, as well as addressing the proliferation of drugs and undocumented immigrants. A total of 227 fishing permits were inspected at harbours, camping sites and launching pads and R3500 worth of fines were issued for contravening the Marine Living Resources Act.

Four vehicle checkpoints were also conducted on the Port Nolloth / Alexander Bay and the Port Nolloth / Kleinsee roads during which 93 vehicles and 217 persons were stopped and searched.

The Operation led to the arrest of six suspects for contravening the Marine Living Resources Act, Immigration Act, dealing and possession of drugs, as well as riotous behaviour. A vehicle was also seized.

It is the second time there has been a sting operation in the area. Two weeks prior, small-scale fishers from Hondeklipbaai were stopped by SAPS and the SANDF under Operation 'Vula Umgodi' led by the DFFE. It is Masifundise's view that this was "another attempt to criminalise and intimidate small-scale fishers".

Court action threat

Small-scale fishers are threatening court action over the number of boats they have been allocated for line-fishing.

Wilmien Wicomb, of the Legal Resources Centre (LRC), which is representing the fishers, has asked the DFFE to reconsider the allocation. If not the fishers would "approach the High Court for appropriate relief".

According to Wicomb, while the 300 boats allocated under the interim relief catered for about 2000 fishers, the 377 boats must now accommodate about 270 cooperatives, with 12000 fishers. The final allocation of vessels to two Northern Cape co-operatives is just nine. This had been 15 vessels during the 2022/23 and 2023/24 seasons while the Western Cape small-scale rights were being finalised.

CAF research study

A DFFE media [statement](#) in March acknowledges that traditional linefish is a key and important resource which has been included in the basket of species for the small-scale fishing sector.

“In order to ensure that the traditional linefish sector is managed sustainably going into the future, and in recognising the significance and importance of traditional linefish to small-scale fishers, I will be requesting the Consultative Advisory Forum (the CAF) to conduct a research study during the course of the 2024-2025 fishing season into the traditional linefish fishery ,”Minister Creecy says.

This will advise her on strategies and measures that can be put in place to ensure the sustainable management of the resource while also enabling equitable and fair access between the resource users.

“The CAF will be requested to review and advise on current catch data collected from all sectors harvesting linefish; the existing bag and size limits; the current moratoria on the catching of certain endangered linefish species; closed and open seasons, and how the impact of other fisheries on linefish stocks can be minimised,” she says.

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